

## When Japan Broke a Long Peace

STORY BY A MAN WHO WAS THERE OF THE UNITED STATES  
SHIP WYOMING'S VICTORY AGAINST GREAT ODDS IN THE  
STRAITS OF SHIMONOSEKI IN 1863 — RUNNING THE  
SHORE BATTERIES

It was in the summer of 1863 that according to the decree of the Shogun or Tycoon, the "haughty barbarian" was to be expelled from Japan and the Mori, the powerful daimo of Choshiu attempted to bar the passage of foreign vessels through the Straits of Shimonoseki by firing on them. June 25 was the date set for the carrying out of that decree, and on that day Mori was provided with exactly what he wanted to enable him to carry out his part in the program, for, during the afternoon, the American merchant vessel Pembroke entered the straits on her way to Nagasaki and China, having on board a pilot that had been supplied by the Yeddo government; she was fired on by the land batteries, also by the guns of the armed brig Kosei, but escaped unhurt.

Thus the peace of two centuries and a half was broken. In April of that same year Commander McDougal of the United States navy, in command of the Wyoming, was in Hongkong looking for trouble, in the shape of a Confederate privateer; he received orders from Mr. Pruyn, the United States minister in Yokohama to bring his ship to that port, and to have her guns ready for service as the Japanese were beginning to give trouble to foreigners. Incendiarism and assassination on the part of the "rouin" were on the increase, and, as a matter of fact, the United States legation was burned shortly after the arrival in port of the Wyoming, but whether by accident or design, could never be found out. On July 11 Commander McDougal heard from his minister the news of the firing on the Pembroke on the 25th of the previous month, the news having come up from Shanghai, and he was glad enough that Mori had provided an immediate substitute for an Alabama. Nothing daunted by the fact that he was not acquainted with the passage of the straits, and could not obtain any chart of the place, he ordered coal on board and procured two pilots from the government; then he lost no time in sailing out to Shimonoseki.

The Wyoming's Guns.  
The Wyoming was a sloop of war

of 700 tons equipped with four thirty-two-pounder side guns and two eleven-inch Dahlgren pivot guns. She carried a crew of 160 officers and men, all of whom seemed "fit," and they composed a really good crew. The writer was the very first to board the Wyoming on her arrival in Yokohama, carrying a message from Admiral Kuper, and he had many opportunities of revisiting the ship during her stay in port, becoming very intimate with most of the officers and forming a great liking and mutual friendship with that kindly old gentleman and thorough sailor, Commander McDougal.

It was this friendship and intimacy with the other officers that enabled him to get a true account of the "episode" at first hand and unvarnished, and from having visited the scene of the action, he felt almost that he had seen the whole thing. The Straits of Shimonoseki form the watery gateway of the Inland Sea, the actual straits being in the neighborhood of three miles long and from one and a half to two miles wide, but the navigable channel is only from three to seven hundred feet wide. The town consists principally of one long street running along the foot of some bold bluffs, and there is a ravine in which the houses cluster pretty thickly; the population was, at that period, about fifteen or sixteen thousand persons. The batteries, or, more correctly speaking, the redoubts or platforms where the seventy-four guns were mounted, extended from a point at the extreme east of the straits right up to the town itself; the village of Chofu, where the heaviest guns were mounted, being nearly in the middle of that line. There was also a ten-gun fort, named Buzen, on the opposite shore, but in such a position that it could not come into action against any ship that was attacking the town of Shimonoseki. Among other guns on shore there were several eight-inch Dahlgrens, which had been given to the government at Yeddo, but in some way had got into Mori's hands. In addition to the shore batteries, the Japanese had three armed vessels.

One Vessel Against Three

The Wyoming entered the narrow straits at 6 o'clock on the morning of July 16. Signal guns were fired from the first redoubt and the warning was passed along as far as the town. Before the ship was within sight of the town the first shot struck her above the engine room. No reply was made, however, till the Wyoming rounded the Monshi promontory on the southern shore, when the three ships and the whole town burst into view. Stakes had been driven into the mud on the edge of the navigable channel and it was evident—even from the first shot fired—that the Japanese knew the exact distance and expected to blow the ship to smithereens. The steamer Koshin was lying close in under the forts, and McDougal ordered the man at the wheel to steer direct for her, as he intended to take her. The pilot got frightened and told him he would run his ship on shore, as there was not enough water and they were doing all they could to keep the vessel on the southern shore: it was evident that they were not accustomed to fighting.

As soon as the Wyoming was seen to be steering for the northern shore, the steamer and another battery, up the side of the hill, began to fire; this was one of the batteries that had an eight-inch Dahlgren. About then another battery opened and then was shown McDougal's wisdom in steaming out of the staked channel, as the shot began to pass above the hull and up in the rigging. The three Japanese men of war carried eighteen guns between them. Even by this time, the Wyoming had several wounded and three killed. As she neared the Japanese vessels her flag was run up with cheers by the crew and it was at once saluted by a fresh shore battery of our guns. By 10:30 a. m., the American vessel was in front of the town. She dashed in between the steamer and the two brigs and was soon abreast of the Kosei which fired a broadside from her four brass 20-pounders. The Koshin was not able to do very much damage, her guns being pointed up the channel; but the brig was so close that the faces of her crew were plainly discernible, and the guns of the two ships were nearly touching each other. So rapidly did the Japanese work her guns that no less than three broadsides were fired before the Wyoming passed her. As the American vessel went between the two Japanese ships she fired both broadsides, and every shot found its

billet. Now the inevitable happened; the Wyoming cleared the steamer and steered over toward the southern shore, and all the shore batteries getting the range again, together with the guns on the bark, concentrated their fire on her, and—she grounded—but, despite that fact and the holes torn in her side by shells, she still vigorously continued firing.

The Koshin had slipped her cable and made toward the shore under the batteries, either for the purpose of escaping or to attempt to ram and board the American ship. One of the brigs showed signs of distress and was evidently about to sink. But McDougal was not content to carry on the fight with his ship in the mud, so he set her propeller to work to get her off; fortunately this was a powerful one, and, after several attempts she floated again.

### Shot Hit the Boiler

Ignoring the sinking brig, the Wyoming paid all her attention to the oncoming Koshin. In doing so she had to contend with the swift-running current. The bow chaser was the gun that proved the most service at this moment, as the broadsides could not yet come into play. The bow gun, however, did its work well and the second shot passed through the vessel piercing her side just above the water-line. It smashed the boiler, came out on the other side, and exploded in the town, half a mile away. Great volumes of steam rose from the disabled ship, and spars and wreckage were hurled up in the air. Her officers left in the small boats to pull for the shore, and the crew jumped overboard just as the steamer sank from sight. At least forty of these men lost their lives. By this time the Wyoming was well past the town itself and had her work cut out to make way against the very powerful tide. The bark was still firing as fast as she could serve the guns, and the guns in the batteries were finding their target. McDougal decided to set the bark first and then give his attention to the shore guns. The bark was soon disabled and worthless. On her way back the Wyoming dropped most of her shots right in the batteries, one of which was completely destroyed.

Half an hour after noon the firing ceased, the Wyoming having fired from fifty to sixty shots in all. The enemy must have fired one hundred and thirty or more shots in the same time. The Wyoming lost five men killed and seven wounded; she was hulled ten times and her smokestack

had six holes in it, her masts were injured, and her rigging was pretty badly cut up. The Japanese lost two vessels sunk and had one disabled. One battery was destroyed and many men were killed or wounded; the number of their casualties was never ascertained, as in Yokohama we were dependent on Yeddo for information, and the reports from there were erratic.

### The Credit Due McDougal

There is no doubt that McDougal was entitled to all the glory and honor he ever got for the part he played in the opening up of Dai Nipon. Perhaps, had the United States not been busy attending to other matters nearer home at the time, McDougal would have had his services more fully recognized.

During the engagement, the Wyoming was under fire from three ships, and, at one time or another, from eight batteries, and either one or two gun redoubts. Before she got through she sank two of the ships, made a lame duck of the third; she went aground and worked off again without aid, she disabled at least one of the batteries, and silenced several of the others. She carried only six guns herself, but had opposed to her no less than ninety-two guns, some of which were heavy ordnance.

### When shall her glory fade?

Think, think of the wild fight she waged!

For this little "episode" the United States collected \$12,000, part of which went to the owners of the S. S. Pembroke.

On entering the harbor of Yokohama the following day, the Wyoming was greeted with cheers from the Conqueror and other British war vessels, as well as those of other nations then at anchor, and Admiral Kuper made great haste to congratulate Commander McDougal. Very shortly afterward, having made good her damages, the Wyoming, in compliance with orders she had received prior to coming to Japan at the urgent request of the United States minister, left the East for home waters. She had the hearty good wishes of all who remained behind, and dozens of people lined the Bund to see her steam out. The writer, too, felt that he had lost a friend as she turned the point and sank from sight, but there has always been a lingering memory and pleasant recollections in his heart for as kind and good-natured a friend as ever he had in his life in the person of David McDougal.—New York Evening Post.

## House Cleaning Time

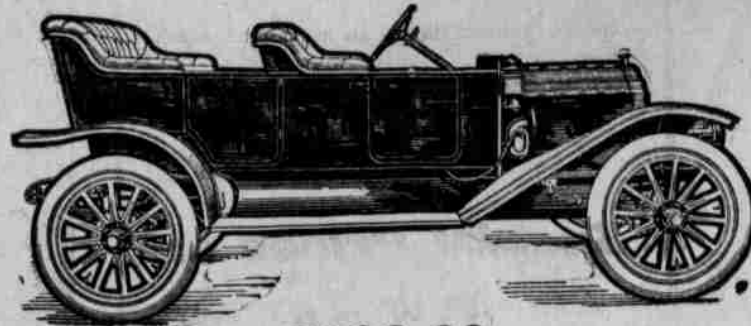
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Christopher Colt, Sr. .... Lawrence Clark  
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Bert Bellaby ..... Ed. McWenle  
Mr. Glib ..... Charles Trumbull  
Mr. Swanson ..... Henry Hipsch

Job ..... John Condon  
Dora ..... Mary Tipton  
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